

This is the premier appearance of Certification Corner. The purpose of this column is to provide ongoing information about the National Certification Project. It will be a regular feature in Hands On, so look for this column in future issues.

Certification Corner

by Elliot Greene

In August of 1988 the AMTA National Board of Directors unanimously approved a plan to develop a national certification exam in massage therapy. Not much has been published about the national certification project after it was first announced. This column, along with other upcoming efforts, is intended to fill this "information gap" and:

- ☒ Give an accurate picture of what certification represents.
- ☒ Share the enthusiasm and commitment felt at the national level.
- ☒ Convey to you the benefits of becoming nationally certified.

In January 1989, I was named Project Manager of the National Certification Exam Program. The major responsibility of this position is to act in an executive capacity in guiding the development of the project. Since my appointment, I have spent a great deal of time consulting with recognized experts in the field of professional certification and credentialing, developing an expertise in this complex subject, and doing the groundwork of laying the foundation for the certification process.

The National Certification Project will be initially guided by a National Steering Committee. Applications for the committee have been solicited and more than 70 applications have been received over the last few

months. The selection of the committee will be made soon. One of the first tasks of the committee will be to hire a nationally known and respected testing company that will, in concert with the committee, do the preliminary studies required (such as a job analysis) and the actual test development. Certification will be voluntary, and the certification program will be based on the objective development of an examination to be administered independently by a certification board. Eligibility to take the exam will be independent of Association membership or any other professional affiliation. The first administration of the new certifying exam is projected to take place in the Fall of 1991.

At the National Convention in Toronto, I, along with National Director of Education Pat Benjamin, made a major two hour presentation to the National Board of Directors on credentialing and certification. Briefer presentations were made to the Presidents Council and the General Assembly. When addressing the membership, the following commitments were made:

- ☒ To keep you informed.
- ☒ To elicit your valued input.
- ☒ To develop a certification program that meets or exceeds the rigorous standards that exist for certification programs so that the massage

therapy profession is graced with a high quality credential.

As part of this commitment, you will be receiving a special mailing on certification. It will contain a booklet conveying the benefits of certification, a brochure explaining what certification is, and a flyer discussing typical questions and answers. Look for it in the mail early this Fall. Please read it (and send in the reply card inside).

As the National Certification Program takes shape, we will continue to disseminate accurate, responsible information. During the next two years we will be answering your questions, discussing issues (such as eligibility) and eliciting your input. With the National Certification Program, our profession is coming of age.

National certification will be an effective means of upgrading our professional status and standards. With national certification we will be taking a vital step in protecting our freedom to practice and having control over our future. Perhaps another great contribution we can make to our society is to show how we can demonstrate our abilities, yet remain true to our heritage and retain our caring values. National certification is healthy for everyone. ♦